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Round about Panyam

E. HAYWARD

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CHURCH MISSIONARY SOCIETY

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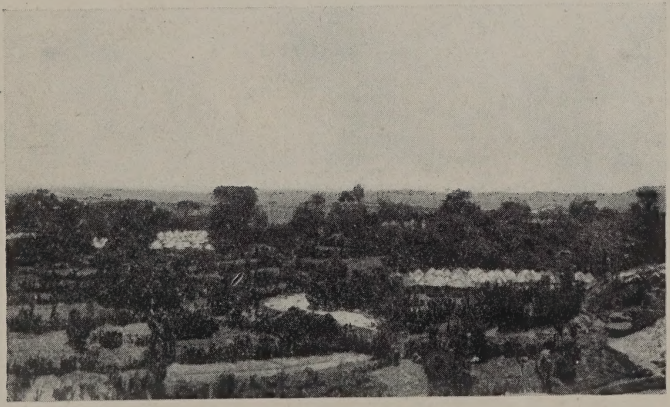
THE C.M.S. COMPOUND, PANYAM



NATIVE COMPOUNDS, PANYAM

DAKWA, A FORMER CHIEF OF PANYAM

On the left he is seen in his royal robes; in the right-hand picture he is starting out to farm his land.

ROUND ABOUT PANYAM

Chapter I

Where is Panyam?

PANYAM is a town in that part of West Africa generally known as Nigeria, so called because it forms part of the huge territory through which the great river Niger—2000 miles in length—takes its tortuous course. But Panyam is not within 150 miles of the river, for it lies away to the east of the Niger, north of its great tributary, the Benue, and about half-way between Lagos and Lake Chad, in what are now known as the Northern Provinces of Nigeria.

Nigeria has become one country under one Governor. Formerly there were two distinct parts, with two totally distinct administrations, known as Northern and Southern Nigeria. Previously to this the Royal Niger Company was entrusted with a charter for the whole of the country not included in the French zone of authority, agreed to in 1890, but in 1900 this charter was surrendered, and since then the Colonial Office of Great Britain has been responsible for the administration of the whole country, while the Niger Company has confined itself entirely to trade.

The country of which Panyam is the centre was opened up by a British patrol in 1905, and the first Europeans to live within the boundaries of the tribe were the first two missionaries sent out by the C.M.S. to that region. The government station was established about twenty miles away in the territory of a neighbouring tribe, and for some time these were the only Europeans in the Panyam district. Gradually, however, tin mines were opened up by various European companies, and although no tin worth working was actually found near Panyam, yet several camps were built on the north-west boundary of the tribe, and these all helped to familiarize the native with Europeans and their ways.

In early days, there was no railway from the coast beyond Abeokuta in Southern Nigeria. All approach to Northern Nigeria was made by stern-wheel paddle boats on the Niger, via Forcados, Onitsha, and Lokoja. From Lokoja, which in those days was the most important town in the country, the traveller bound for Panyam went up to Baro on the Niger, or to Loko or Ibi on the Benue, possibly in another stern-wheeler or, if the river were too low for that, in a canoe. Progress by this method was not remarkable for its rapidity. Whatever the river port at which the landing was made the journey was continued overland, on foot and horseback, or sometimes by hammock, and occupied months.

To-day Panyam is within three easy days' journey of the terminus of the Bauchi light railway, which was built expressly for the tin traffic from the Bauchi plateau, and connects with the main Nigerian railway from Lagos to Kano. Travelling by this line is not exactly luxurious, as compared with railway travelling in England; but it has brought Panyam within a week of Lagos, and within three weeks of Liverpool, if everything goes right *en route* with carriers and connexions, so there has been great improvement. The distance from Lagos to Panyam is roughly 800 miles.

Before going farther it is important to explain the relationship between the British Government and the native rulers. There is a central government station for each province, with several sub-stations, each in charge of a district officer, who is responsible to the Resident at the central station. Each district officer has an immense area to administer, and this he does through the properly constituted native chiefs, who are usually either hereditary or elected by the people, but in some cases are appointed by the Government. These district officers have to administer justice in the innumerable cases brought to them either in their own offices, or when out on trek in their districts; they are also responsible for the collection of taxes from the various tribes, and have to assess the different towns at the amount which they think the people are able to pay. The officials' difficulties with regard to language and custom are legion, but they succeed in their

task to a marvellous degree, and they have so far triumphed over their difficulties that they have established among all the subject peoples a reputation for justice and fair play, of which they may well be proud.

Each chief is supposed to settle the minor and purely local cases brought to him, but when either party is dissatisfied with his decision, or if the matter in dispute affects some other town over which the chief in question has no jurisdiction, recourse is made inevitably to "Bature-Judgee" (the English district officer), and what he says is final. Taxation is nominally in the form of a head-tax, but as it is impossible to obtain the exact population, the district officer fixes the total for each town, or district, and suggests to the various chiefs how much each man shall pay. As the census in government books is generally an under-estimate there is no difficulty in raising the sum named, and the people are beginning to see the benefits which they receive in return from Government,—peace, protection, and justice. Women are not included in this taxation, only men and boys who are old enough to go out and work on the farms are liable. A few days' work at the mines generally suffices to raise the small sum needed.

Although Panyam stands very high, and the nights are invariably cool, not to say cold at times, it is in West Africa, and West Africa will never be a white man's land or a health resort. When the plateau was first discovered, there was fond talk of building sanatoria for officials and others who might need a place in which to recuperate without going to Europe in search of health. But the promise of a health resort has not been redeemed, and the scourge of the white race in West Africa—blackwater fever—has been as prevalent there as in any part of the protectorate. It is true that there are few swamps, except in the middle of the rainy season, and consequently mosquitoes are not as plentiful as in lower-lying districts, but there is a species of sun-fever which makes up for any lack of the ordinary tropical malaria, and travellers need to take precautions against this.

There are two distinct seasons in the year—a dry season from October to March, and a wet season from April

to September. During the dry season a hot day wind from the north-east blows persistently, with little variation; this brings with it a very fine dust or sand, probably from the Sahara, and at times raises clouds which may be so thick as almost to hide the sun from view. At such times the nights are very cold, and there are rumours of ice having been seen, but the official and credible eye-witness has yet to be discovered. Certainly there is no word either for ice or snow in the languages of the plateau, as far as ascertained at present.

A Typical Panyam Compound

A School Gathering at an Out-Station
Toma, evangelist in charge, stands fourth from the left.

Native Evangelists, Panyam

Chapter II

Bauchi Highlanders

THERE is no one tribe that can be said to be the Nigerian tribe. How many tribes there are it would be impossible to say—their name is legion[1]—but the total population has been estimated roughly at seventeen millions. In the Southern Provinces two very large tribes occupy the greater part of the country, namely, the Yoruba and the Ibo; but in the Northern, with the exception of the Hausas, who are rather a fusion than an original tribe, there is no one that is predominant.

In the districts which were over-run by the Mohammedan invasion long years ago, the identity of religion forced upon the inhabitants by the conquerors has tended to obliterate the original tribal distinctions. In those districts which are still pagan, the opposite holds true, and the various religions and religious forms tend to keep the tribes still apart. The language question, too, is an effective barrier between race and race. Hausa is spoken wherever the Mohammedans extended their empire, but everywhere else each people, whether great or small in number, has its own separate language; and this constitutes a great problem alike for the government of the country and for its speedy evangelization. It was estimated by a highly-placed government official who had trekked through the province in question, that within a radius of two hundred miles from the city of Bauchi, there were no less than seventy different tribes, all with differing languages.

It was among one of these pagan tribes in the province which bears the name of its capital, Bauchi, that the writer and his wife were privileged to spend the greater

[1] One modern authority—Mr. W. J. Roome, of the British and Foreign Bible Society—gives 209 as the number of tribes in Nigeria.

part of eight years. Hence, if these chapters seem to deal with life in the backwoods rather than in the busy centres of Northern Nigeria, the reason is not far to seek. What is said about these people is true, to a large extent, about the many other similar tribes.

The precise meaning of the term pagan is not always appreciated. To the old Roman it meant the dweller in country districts, and as such it was a synonym for ignorance, and the bearer was a fit object for ridicule to the cultured townsman. But in Nigeria the meaning is somewhat different. The pagan there is the native who is not a Mohammedan. For the most part he dwells in country districts, as he is self-dependent, and must have plenty of room for growing his crops; but, strictly speaking, the non-Mohammedan inhabitant of any town is still a pagan within the meaning of the word. He is an object of ridicule to the Mohammedan, who despises him because he is a worshipper of spirits, and does not observe the stated hours of so-called prayer. In the Hausa language there is a special word for such, which the proud Moslem loves to apply with great emphasis to his pagan neighbour, particularly when there is a dispute and feeling runs high. Then does he snarl out "arna (dog)," with a great rolling of his "r"—a word he would not dare to use if alone with the object of his hatred—he might pay for it with his life if he did.

The name of the particular tribe under consideration is the Ma-gha-vul, the second syllable having a very guttural sound; at least, that is the name which the people themselves use. On government maps, and in government quarters generally, the tribe figures as Sura, and thereby hangs a tale.

Local tradition relates that long years ago one of the great Moslem warriors tried to reduce this tribe to subjection. The next tribe to the north, by name the Piyemawa, had already gone under, though they never became Moslems, and the Hausa conqueror thought to extend his dominion farther south with great ease. He was not a little mistaken. He marched out from the territory of the Piyemawa in full confidence of his prowess, but returned with his army in full flight; and this failure

is largely accountable for the fact that the Piyemawa saw no reason to adopt the faith of the Moslem in preference to their own animism. What happened, apparently, was this. The Hausas were accustomed to meet with serried masses of pagans on foot, whom their mounted men charged, and threw into confusion, and the rest was easy. Every one who offered resistance was killed, and those who did not resist were carried off to be sold as slaves; every house was set on fire, and all property of any value taken. But on this occasion the invaders found that they had met their match, for before they were aware of it, they were attacked on every side by mobile troops of light horse, who rode down upon them apparently without any preconcerted plan. These were the Maghavul pagans, mounted on their small, wiry ponies.

Their strategy might well be summed up in the one word "worry"; and they carried this out effectively. From every possible point of vantage dashed these hardy warriors, hurling their spears, and following up with long knives as they got to close quarters. Then just as quickly they wheeled off, and made for cover, only to repeat the same tactics at some other point. They had the advantage of knowing every inch of the country in which they were fighting, whereas the Hausas had to rely on guides whom they had taken with them from among the Piyemawa. Little wonder that before very long the invading host was thrown into confusion. They were a match for any pagans in open warfare; but this guerilla type of fighting was too much for them. They did not know from which quarter to prepare for attack, and the broken country in which they found themselves was all in favour of their assailants. So, to the utter amazement of the Piyemawa, back came the proud Hausas in headlong flight, and never again did they try to push forward to the south. In consequence of this defeat, the Hausas bestowed a new name on the tribe which had routed them; they were not content with calling them merely "arna," they also designated them "sura," clearly a name of supreme contempt, though entirely undeserved.

The next foreigners to enter the country were the British, who went through with a patrol in 1905. Their

guides were members of the Piyemawa tribe, who knew the lie of the land slightly, and their interpreters men of the same tribe, speaking both Hausa and Maghavul. This time the invaders approached from the east, by way of an open plain. They brought with them a small gun, which was useful for giving what are generally known as "demonstrations," wherewith to impress the minds of the natives. The following account, substantially in the words of an eyewitness, shows the effect produced :—

"We heard that the white people were coming into our land, but the news did not alarm us at all. We had not forgotten how our fathers had treated a former foe who had wanted to come in, and we knew that we were in no wise inferior to our forefathers in warlike prowess. So we gathered out on the plain to the east of the town (Panyam), mounted men for the most part, the rest on foot. We were rather pleased than otherwise to have this opportunity of putting our strength to the test. Away in the distance we could see the place where the invaders had camped the night before ; we could see them moving about, and doubtless wondering what to do. We decided that when we had got together all our available forces we would attack them where they were, and send them back along the road by which they had come. We were all gathering together, and discussing the strange stories which we had heard about these new people, when, with a tremendous noise like thunder, something dropped from the skies, and three ponies fell dead, their riders being hurled to the ground, and certain of the bystanders were knocked over too, and hurt very badly.

"We had never heard of anything of the kind before ; evidently these strange people had power over the clouds, and were able to make things fall upon us from there. We did not wait for any more, but soon scattered in the direction of the rocks, on the top of which were our houses, where we found shelter for our heads in some good caves. We waited for something more to happen, but it was all quiet, and when we ventured out, we saw that the strange people had not moved from their camp, but were still sitting down and not attempting to come and take our town.

"Our old men hastened to find the chief and confer with him as to what was to be done. He, too, had hidden among the rocks, but some one had seen where he went, so we went to find him in his place of retreat. He was not at all disposed to show himself outside, for he was taking auguries as to what was the meaning of all this, and the replies were unsatisfactory. One old man, by name Padda, was strongly of the opinion that the only wise thing to do was to go and seek peace with the invader before he killed everybody in the country. He would go alone if no one had the pluck to accompany him, and would come back and tell the chief what transpired.

"Eventually his counsel won the day, and, accompanied by two very timid and aged senators, he went cautiously down the path to the enemy camp. On arrival, he was taken to the leader's tent, and one of the Piyemawa men was sent for to interpret. After much grovelling and throwing of dust on his head—the local term for which is 'earth-eating'—the visitor was told to sit down, and listen to what the white man wanted to say. He then heard to his utter surprise that the white man had not come to kill them or to eat up their land, wanted no slaves, and would pay for anything he needed. All that was required of the Maghavul was that they should stop fighting among themselves, against their neighbours, and against the white man, to whom they should pay a certain small tax every year; and further, that they should allow any one who wanted to come into or pass through their country.

"Padda hastened back to the town with this astounding message, and before long had persuaded the chief to accompany him to the white man. The terms of peace were speedily accepted, and the following morning the British patrol passed through the town *en route* for the country beyond. Here it encountered stiff resistance. Even the tale of the generous treatment of Panyam failed to overcome the stubborn determination of the hill-men never to allow any outsider within their country. Hence there was a fight, and the paramount chief of this part was captured and put into handcuffs; his proud, independent character could brook no such disgrace as

captivity; he employed the dark hours of the night in filling his mouth with sand and gravel, and in the morning was found dead in the little grass hut in which he had been confined."

This story serves to show the character of the pagan peoples who inhabit a great part of Northern Nigeria. Sturdy, independent highlanders, they were a foe who inspired terror wherever they carried their forays. In a country where might is right, the weakest invariably go to the wall or—in the phraseology of the country—to the cooking pot. Little wonder then that the Maghavul farms cover the area where the best soil is to be found. Tribes inferior, whether in number or in the warlike sciences, are inevitably found where the soil is likewise inferior; they may have undeniable rights to better country, but even the most ancient rights are of no value in the presence of superior might. To the pagan warrior possession is ten points of the law.

Chapter III

A Pagan's Religion

THE pagan possesses a real faith in the unseen. To him it is very real, and something much to be feared. The air is full of disembodied spirits, all of them hostile to the generation now embodied. They have the power of working harm of all kinds to the living, and therefore need to be propitiated by food, drink, and other offerings. The idea of sacrifice is present, for life is taken and blood poured out upon the earth ; but the moral significance has been largely lost, and the feast which follows the sacrifice is of far greater importance than anything else. Among an illiterate people, where there is no recognized priest other than the head of each household, it is inevitable that the original meaning of such rites should be forgotten, and that religion should become largely a matter of custom. Often when asked for a reason for a particular rite, the pagan explains that it is because his father performed it, and what his father did he must continue, whether he sees a reason for it or not.

When a likeness to a deceased relative is discovered in a child, it is thought that the spirit of the departed has returned in this form, and will bear in mind all affronts and injuries suffered in its previous existence.

There is a distinct idea of transmigration, and even re-incarnation. The spirits of the dead return in the bodies of owls, and therefore these birds are much feared, and must not be killed. If an owl is heard hooting near a house, the old people can generally determine what spirit has returned to his old haunts in this new form ; and the purpose of the return is always the same—to wreak vengeance on some former foe. Occasionally a white man has shot an owl, just to show that its death will do no harm to anybody, whether black or white !

the men of the place have usually protested, and produced wonderful stories of the dire results likely to attend such a crime. In one case, however, where a nightly visitor had long troubled a whole native compound, and (if such a thing be possible in the African mind) had produced a state of "nerves" among the inhabitants, they persuaded themselves that the putting away of the pest would only bring penalty on the murderer, and not on the dead person's relatives; accordingly they sent a deputation to the white man, begging him to bring his gun. The owl was shot; the murderer survives unhurt to this day!

The doctrine of a future life is clearly defined. There are two distinct localities or spheres to which the spirits of the dead may go. One is "Cibelang" (pronounced Cheebellang), a good place away beyond the hills on the eastern horizon, somewhere in the vicinity of the sunrise. Naturally every one hopes to reach this place, but none can be certain of doing so, because on the way to it there is a bad place, a kind of under-world, called "Wongohor" (pronounced Wong-gog-her), into which many fall as they journey to the better land, and from which there is no escape.

The dead are buried in a sitting posture, with their faces towards the east, i.e. towards Cibelang. The graves are merely pits, about five feet in depth, which must not be filled in, because the departed spirit may want to return to its former habitation; they are covered in with thorny brushwood and cactus to keep away hyenas, which make a practice of robbing graves whenever possible. After a certain period, when nothing remains in the grave except the skeleton, it is customary to remove the skull and take it to an augurer, who will determine its value from the lines which are visible on it. If he pronounces it to be good, the relatives then put it in a place of honour reserved specially among the rocks. If it is not good, it is thrown away, and the unwary passer-by may find himself kicking it along the road. The marks of a good skull are known only to the augurer; to the outsider it seems that the verdict depends on the fee paid or on the regard in which the family is held by the augurer.

It is believed that certain people possess the power of

trajecting their personality into living creatures, and particularly into the hyena. These marauders at night frequently carry away dogs and goats and sheep, as well as rob the newly occupied graves. They are possessed of remarkably strong forequarters, and though only the size of a small collie-dog, one of them can seize and quickly carry away a full-sized goat. A hyena raid is a much dreaded occurrence, for goats and sheep are standard currency in the land, and a man's wealth is gauged by his possessions of this kind, far more than by any bags of money, or bundles of paper notes, which he will probably hide in his corn-bin without letting anybody know of their existence. Owing to their pace and cunning, hyenas are very rarely killed; and their escape is naturally attributed to the human mind within them for the time being. If a chance one is killed, it is not difficult to discover the death of some member of the tribe that same night; clearly his personality was in the hyena when it was killed, and therefore he suffered likewise.

It is not easy to disabuse even an enlightened man of this belief. One of the leading Christians, whose word could be trusted implicity, used to tell a story of an experience when he was still heathen. He had risen very early one morning before daylight, and gone outside his house; while standing there, he saw a hyena coming in from the bush, and he made up his mind to follow it. To his utter amazement, it entered one of the native compounds, and went into a hut, to which there was but one entrance. He followed it into the inner hut, with the intention of killing it, when it turned round to come out, but was astonished only to find, cringing on the ground, an old man who begged him not to tell anybody.

It is an insult of the very worst kind to tell any one that he has been playing hyena. Once there was very nearly a scene of bloodshed in the mission compound at Panyam. An old man had come down from the town to sell firewood; he was not as fine a specimen of manhood as many of his fellows, and the boys saw fit to suggest that he was in the custom of spending his nights in the bush as a hyena. In a moment he whipped out his long knife, and if he had succeeded in catching hold of one of

his tormentors, he would have wreaked a terrible vengeance on him; but fortunately, before he could do so, a missionary came along and persuaded him to go away peaceably.

The idea of the existence of a God is very vague in the land of the Maghavul. They say that Nan (pronounced with a long "a" almost like Narn in English) made the earth and the sky; but that after He had made it, He left it and went very far away, so far indeed that He has never been seen or heard of since. The place to which He went is Deng-nan, or Ting-nan, literally, the place above which belongs to God. Sometimes, however, the name of the place is used to denote the person, generally in a somewhat fatalistic spirit, as in the words, "If Heaven says so, then we shall die." But though clearly there is an idea of a personal Creator here, there is no fear of Him; He has no practical bearing upon everyday life. The spirit world is far more real, and therefore much more to be dreaded.

There is no conception of sin, even though the idea of blood-sacrifice is present. Lying, thieving, etc., are quite in order, provided that they are successfully accomplished; but even when the perpetrators are discovered, their crime lies not so much in the wrongdoing, as in the folly of being found out.

Each compound, or collection of native huts, has one special hut devoted to the local cult. It always stands close to the entrance of the compound, and externally is just like any of the other huts; but it is approached by a private little path of its own, and the door is generally blocked up with a thick mat plaited with reeds. Only the old men are allowed to enter it, and they will not divulge what it contains, or what takes place inside. One white man ventured to pry within, and he was not greatly impressed with what he saw; he found an ordinary native hut, with the remains of a fire, and a few cooking pots lying around. The floor was thickly covered with ashes and dirt; and like all other huts, the only light which penetrated came in through the door. But in the glorious (?) days of old, these huts had a different tale to tell of scenes witnessed within them, when the unhappy victims of inter-tribal and inter-town forays were sacrificed, nominally to the spirits, actually to provide the where-

withal for a big feast. The skulls of the victims were kept within these huts by way of commemoration of glorious achievements; but when the British law concerning murder became known, and one or two men were seized for that offence and punished severely, it was thought wiser to remove the contents of these huts to a safe distance, where they would be less likely to be discovered. The Maghavul call the whole system by one name, "Kum."

There are two clearly defined seasons in the year, the dry and the wet. The latter is heralded by a special form of Kum, known as Nji, in the performance of which town follows town in due order, starting at the southern boundary of the tribe, and proceeding to the north. The idea seems to be that the rain is brought by two spirits, an old man and an old woman, carrying some very big drums, by which they signify their approach to the inhabitants. They talk in the local language, the woman in a very high-pitched squeaky voice, and the man in an exceedingly gruff tone. The purport of their communication is always the same, namely, that they are very hungry, and must be supplied with abundant provisions immediately. Only men must show themselves outside the houses when the first sound of the drum is heard. The women who are out in the fields or coming along the roads must rush to hide within their huts as quickly as possible, on pain of death, and great is their consternation if far away from home when they hear the dread noise. Doubtless in previous years some women were set upon and killed, but to-day the presence of the white man in the land, and his very strict law concerning murder, render it inadvisable to observe the ancient custom in its literal form, though the terror of it still possesses the women for the most part.

The object of the visit of Nji being to procure food, it is the duty of the women to cook it and send it out to the yard, where their menfolk are receiving their two august guests. There is no stint on this occasion; much corn is ground, fowls are killed, or even sheep and goats, in order that the goodwill of the visiting spirits may be secured, for who knows what harm they may be able to work on those who offend them? Small boys are sent

out with the food when it is ready, and in the meanwhile the noise of the drums and the shrieks of the supposed old couple are increasing in volume, and they do not hesitate to say what form of nourishment will be most palatable to them. For instance, there is a particular species of bean, which is quite a delicacy, as it is not widely cultivated ; every housewife sees to it that she has a small store of these in her cupboard or what answers to a cupboard, and she cherishes them carefully against the coming of Nji. The probability is that she will not produce these until she is asked for them.

As may already have been guessed, the whole thing is a sham. The drums are produced year by year from the recesses of some dark hut, and are moved from compound to compound under cover of darkness. If the supply is limited, they are even carried from town to town. Certainly the noise is tremendous and, with the reverberation caused by the high rocks behind the town, to say the least, awe-inspiring. There is little wonder that the poor superstitious womenfolk in their total ignorance are so terrified. The voices which they hear are in reality but the voices of their own menfolk, cunningly disguised ; the shrill falsetto shriek, supposedly that of an old woman, emanating from some young man well known to all concerned, and the gruff tones of her partner from some other strong-lunged individual. The food provided all goes down the throats of the men congregated in the yard, with the exception of a very tiny portion, which is put on some rock or under a tree, the supposed haunt of some spirit.

The religion of the pagan may be summed up in the two words, fear and deceit, and is no help or comfort to him ; yet because he has had it handed down from untold generations, he cannot discard or disprove it of himself. One man when asked to give his candid opinion of the value of his religion said that it was good in that it kept the women under control, and prevented them from devouring all the best of the foodstuffs. But wherever civilization advances, this kind of paganism falls to the ground ; it possesses no visible symbol, there is no actual object of worship, and the materializing effect of so-called civilization

tends to its undoing. For instance, young men go away to work at the mines in order to procure the necessary money for the annual tax; they remain away from home for a week or a month, or even for the whole of the dry season. They certainly do not take their religion with them, nor do they find that they need it, or are any the worse without it in the place to which they go. Consequently by the time they return home, their faith has been largely shaken, and the only part of the ancient rites which appeals to them now is that which benefits the stomach, and even that will disappear in the course of time. For before long, each village or town will possess its small market place, where the Hausa trader will make his little settlement, and also practise his Mohammedanism. He will offer for sale various kinds of food, prepared by his own women, and all of them infinitely superior to the coarse, badly-cooked stodge which emanates from the pagan kitchens. The pagan men, especially the young men and children, will soon make this market place the centre of life in the place, and when they discover how preferable are Hausa to pagan foods, they will no longer trouble to keep up such practices as Nji, for their wants will have been satisfied elsewhere.

Here then is the opportunity of the missionary of Christ. He comes with a message of certainty, and of deliverance from both fear and deceit. He can tell of a God Who is not unknowable, Who, though high and holy, yet is near, and of one sacrifice for sins once offered. To the progressive rising generation, who identify civilization with everything which they find outside the limits of their own tribe, and despise the authorities which once they venerated, there is a possibility of great progress in and through Christ. But the opportunity is a passing one. It is while they are in the transition stage that these people are most open to impression. Now is the time to offer a new and better faith, and thus save them alike from a general agnosticism or indifference and from the meshes of Islam.

Chapter IV

Chiefly Concerning Women

IN Maghavul land women are wealth, and the man who possesses plenty of them, whether as wives or daughters or dependents, is reckoned a wealthy man. But though this may sound as if the women were merely chattels in the hands of their liege-lords, as a matter of fact their lot in life compares favourably with that of those, for instance, in the Moslem parts of the country. They are hard worked certainly, and the work would seem to us to savour of monotony, but they do not appear to notice this, and as they seldom toil alone, they find plenty of opportunity for that world-wide solace and pastime of womenfolk, a little conversation.

In Moslem lands the birth of a baby girl is greatly deplored, but with the pagans it is not so. At once the parents are open to offers of betrothal for her from the parents of some budding boy of approximately the same age. In this sense, a girl pays her way. For the parents of the boy have to pay to those of the girl one or two bags of grain or something equivalent every year, by way of a retaining fee, and this continues until the couple concerned are of marriageable age. Possibly there may be more than one set of parents seeking the girl for their son ; in that event she is promised to the highest bidder. But the irony of the situation is reflected in the fact that during the whole palaver, the two characters most concerned are lolling, all unconscious of their fate, inside the goat-skins which secure them to their mothers' backs.

From the first week of its existence, the child is introduced to the varied occupations of the mother's or elder sister's life, not that he or she is able at this stage to display much practical intelligence or interest. Child or no child, the mother knows that her work has to be done, and she takes

the infant with her wherever she goes. If her destination is to the bush, perhaps eight or more miles out, to cut firewood, the child goes too, and for several hours has to do as best it can on the back of the mother, unless there is an older child, boy or girl, big enough to be saddled with the burden and left at home. If the work of the parent involves much stooping, the child lies in a horizontal position along the mother's back, often with the head lower than the rest of the body. Cry it may, and probably does, but the work has to be done, so the sooner the baby gets used to life the better for all concerned. Is it any wonder that the rate of infant mortality is quite abnormal, and that the majority of the women have lost at least an equal number of children to those whom they have reared ?

Somehow or other African children do not develop as rapidly as English boys and girls, despite the hardening process which they undergo so early in life, but their working life begins at a much earlier age. As soon as she can toddle, the wee girl begins to put little loads on her head. If the distance is not too great she accompanies her mother or sisters when they go out to get wood, and carries home a diminutive load on her head. When the harvest is being threshed, there is always the little basket or bag for the small child to carry home ; and proudly she does it too, full of her own importance as a working member of the community. Before very long, she will be set to grind corn on the rock, a very slow and arduous occupation, but a small grinding stone will be found for her, and she will kneel out on a rock by the side of the others, putting all her strength into the task, as if everything depended on her unaided exertions. She has very little time for play, and only at one season of the year, when there is a little lull in the farming work, and the men go off hunting all day, is she allowed to take part in the dance which is performed by girls only. Besides her agricultural responsibilities, she has also probably to discharge those of nursemaid, and that at a much earlier age than is usual in civilized countries. Her small brother or sister or other relative is strapped on to her back before the mother goes off for her day's work, and even though

the baby is half the child's own size, and she can only just struggle along with this load on her back, it must be endured, and endured it is. When there is a mission school in the town, and the attendance of the nursemaid necessitates the attendance of the infant also, it can easily be understood that the teachers are all in favour of the day-crèche system being extended to Africa as speedily as possible.

As in all other countries, cooking is chiefly done by the women and girls ; but since there are so many other duties, this does not get the time and attention which so important a business deserves. When the women come in at sunset from a long and arduous day in the fields, it is not to be wondered at if they scamp the work of food preparation ; so the porridge has a great deal of husk in it, due to insufficient pounding, and the corn is only half ground, with the result that the meal, when served to the waiting circle around the hearth outside, is about as unappetizing as it could possibly be. The family must needs be possessed of ferocious appetites to tackle it at all. The meals lack variety ; there is always a stiff porridge of some sort, either millet or a similar grain called atcha, and over this is poured some kind of so-called soup, composed of vegetables, or meat if it is available.

The chief event of a woman's life naturally is her marriage. Although she has no say in the matter when the first arrangements are made, as she grows older, she begins to know about it, and takes furtive looks at the youth in question, and finds out all she can about him from her closest friends. But she must never speak to him or be seen with him ; that would be violating all established etiquette. He will probably send her presents, but he must never bring them to her house in person, and the go-between who is employed must not reveal by whom he has been sent ; not that there is any need for him to do so ! When the girl reaches what seems to her suitor a marriageable age, he suggests that he be allowed to make preparations for the marriage. But at this age the girl is of very great use to her mother, so there is invariably a strong refusal, which may or may not put him off for a year—for marriage as for everything else there is only one

suitable season in the year. If, however, the suitor is not to be denied, the girl is invited, or rather beguiled, to a meal at the house of the bridegroom's parents. At the conclusion of this, his friends suddenly pour an enormous quantity of very thick vegetable oil over her, which causes her to seek the privacy of her own home at a run. To western ears this sounds disagreeable, but as a matter of fact, the African girl loves to rub oil all over her skin, as can be understood in a country where a very dry, dusty wind blows for half the year.

This ceremony is tantamount to a year's notice of the actual wedding. Twelve months elapse, and then one evening as the girl is coming back home from her day's work, she is suddenly pounced upon by a party of young gallants, and carried off. She struggles a little, and gives vent to a few piercing yells for help, to which nobody responds. Then she is carried off to some rendezvous appointed by the bridegroom, and hidden for several days. This is in case the parents are not willing to give her up; but where they are known to be agreeable, the man can take his bride to his home forthwith. A great feast and beer-drinking ensues, and all is as it should be according to native custom. The bride takes up her duties at once in the new compound, with the exception of the cooking, which she is not allowed to do for one year after marriage, the mother and sisters of her husband undertaking this as before.

But it may be that the girl has set her heart against the youth who has been paying dowry for her since birth, and in secret has been arranging to go with somebody else. In this case she allows the approved suitor to give her as many presents as he likes, and even to pour the oil over her a year before he proposes to carry her off. Then she makes arrangements with the man of her choice to take her away just before the other man comes. She is seized at night and carried off, and hidden very safely in some outlying compound, whence she does not emerge for days, possibly weeks. Her parents at once raise a hue and cry, and look for her everywhere, for they know that ere long the disappointed suitor will be down upon them, accusing them of collusion with the man who has

carried her off, and demanding repayment of all that he or his parents have given by way of dowry. Possibly the girl's mother has long been receiving gifts in secret from the other party, but she is too wily to confess it; and now joins in the outcry with as much vigour as any one. A great search ensues, usually unsuccessful, and there the matter rests. Sometimes the girl is found and dragged home in triumph for the approved suitor to carry off to his home, but the probability is that she will refuse to stay with him, and before long will go to the other man again.

But even so the story is not ended. If the approved suitor has been disappointed, he demands immediate repayment of everything which he or his parents have ever paid in the form of dowry for the girl. To substantiate his claims, he produces a bill, not written out with the various dates of delivery of the goods, but simply a bundle of grass-stalks, all of the same length, and tied carefully together. Each of these grasses is supposed to represent one payment of corn or salt or whatever it may have been. As a counterblast to this, the parents of the girl likewise repair to their secret store cupboard somewhere in the roof, and produce a similar bunch of aged grass, which is supposed to be their counterfoil to the bill just handed in. It will invariably be found that the two accounts do not tally by any means. The parents' bundle probably only contains about half as many grasses as the creditor's, for it is an accepted principle that the creditor should insert a few more grasses before he hands his bundle in, while on the other hand the debtor has conveniently forgotten to keep record of all the goods received. Hence arises what is known as "palaver." Each side goes into minute detail with regard to what each particular grass represents, and it is wonderful how exact their memories are, or are not, as suits their purpose. Such cases often last on for days and weeks and even months, and very bitter scenes may be enacted before a settlement is reached. Probably the matter will be referred to the chief, or if he is too venal and biassed, to the white missionary or native evangelist, who can be relied on to play a straight game. There is a recognized standard of payment, and the correct sum handed over finishes the case; if the defaulters

offer a pony, and the other party accept it, then it is all over, but for the most part they are not willing for too tame a conclusion to the chapter, and prefer to draw it out to as great a length as possible. Sometimes recourse is had to the district officer at the government station.

Meanwhile, what of the girl? She does not figure in the case at all, except in name. She does just what she likes in the matter of husbands, and her parents have little power over her. But they will probably at once instigate a countersuit against the parents of the young man who has actually won her, and will want them to give a pony or its equivalent to be handed over to the disappointed man.

Having once obtained a wife, it is the man's business to keep her true to him; he cannot afford to treat her badly, or she will take her departure without any demur, and will attach herself to some other man. This individual will raise no objection whatever to her joining his household, for the addition of a newcomer means an increase of wealth, and he will have extra help on his farm from her. A man who possesses three or four wives is able to cultivate far more land than the man with only one; and if he has not been obliged to pay for them, so much the better for him.

The Christian law of marriage is not an improvement on the ancient order in the eyes of the native; by insisting on only one wife the Christian teacher is condemning his adherents to a life of poverty, and who in Africa or elsewhere is willing to look forward to a life of unalleviated pauperdom? But what seems impossible when judged by the standards of men has been accomplished and is being accomplished to-day by the grace of God. There are those who have accepted the teaching of Christ in its entirety, and are to-day living happily and contentedly together as man and wife. Several of them have had experience of polygamy, and when asked whether they would like to revert to it, there is no uncertainty about their refusal. Despite the reproaches of men, and the unwelcome "poverty," they find that the Christian way is the better.

Chapter V

Passing Practices

THE Maghavul tribe have a firmly-rooted idea that the streams and rivers which intersect their country are inhabited by spirits, whom they call "the people of the stream." Such powers were accredited to them that they were thought to be the progenitors of the white men, who had succeeded so miraculously in reducing the hitherto unconquered country. Perhaps long residence beneath the waters was sufficient to account for the pallor of their skins. There were those who would have none of this, for they were convinced that the white men had come from the same place as, and in company with, the lightning. The coming of a white woman, when all were fully persuaded that such a genus did not exist, and later on the arrival of a white infant, gave the death-blow to both these fantastic ideas.

As with all other spirits, the character of the dwellers in the rivers is inevitably malevolent. The most prevalent species of fever is inflicted by them, and they must be consulted as to how the symptoms shall be dealt with. In this matter there is but a small distance in the native mind between their explanation of fever, and that of the European, who maintains that it is caused by the mosquito which breeds in the swamps and damp places. But it will take a great many years to convince them of the wisdom of draining the marshes and filling in all the mudholes, i.e. holes from which mud for building houses has been extracted—where stagnant water stands for the greater part of the dry season.

When any one is taken with fever, recourse is had first to augury by pebbles. The augurer professes to discover from these the cause of the illness, and in the majority of cases he pronounces it to be the work of the people of

the stream. Then a party of men go to the spot which the augurer has designated as the abode of the mischief causers. The leader of the party covers his face with waterweed, and then, bending over the water, he pretends to get into conversation with the spirits. His own voice is heard asking them questions, and the answer comes in a series of remarkable groans and gurgles, emanating from the weed, but not, of course, from the man behind the weed! This jargon he professes to understand, and when he has carried on long enough, he interprets the message to the waiting company, who receive and act upon it with all credulity.

The most frequent remedy for fever is medicine made from the waterweed with which the leader has covered his face. This weed, or some like it from the stream, is carried solemnly on a stick at the head of the procession to the house of the sick man. There it is put into a pot and boiled in water; after sufficient steeping the sick man is given this potion to drink, and if he recovers, his recovery, whether immediate or slow, is always the result of taking the medicine which the people of the stream enjoined.

The high ground in the centre of the Maghavul area forms a watershed for many streams which flow eventually into the Benue, or one of its many tributaries. Each stream has its own name and character to the native, and in different parts of its course it possesses different names, which renders geographical research somewhat difficult when conducted by mere inquiry.

In the rainy season, the streams fill up very rapidly after a storm, and abate as rapidly. Bridges were unknown until the white mallam came along and showed the people how to build them; and as time is not so valuable as in other parts of the globe, the one who was caught on the farther side of a stream when the flood came down, would remain there quite contentedly until the conditions allowed him to make the passage in safety once again. Perhaps friends would know where he was, and if the river was not too broad, would bring some solid food to the other bank, and throw it across to him.

Fatalities are of frequent occurrence, because people mistake the height and strength of the flood, and attempt

a crossing when it has really become impossible. Women are often carried away when trying to get across too late, probably impelled by the thought of the waiting family at home ; they are not as good swimmers as the men, and if once they lose their footing, there is little hope for them. The common verdict is that the people of the stream have carried them away in revenge for some insult or injury which the victim, or a member of the victim's family, has unwittingly committed in the past.

To-day the two streams, which meet in Panyam and continue their course to the north as one fairly large river in the wet season, have both been bridged by the united effort of the white man and the native. The initiative is due entirely to the former, as also the scheme adopted, while the latter supplied the materials and the labour free of cost. In this way one of the main difficulties of the country during the rains has been overcome, but there still remain many unbridged streams out in the bush on the way to the farms, and also along the so-called road which leads to the railway and post office.

As in the majority of other pagan tribes, trial by ordeal was very common, and to some extent it acted as a deterrent from crime. Originally when a man was accused of a crime and there was not enough direct evidence to prove his guilt, he was required to drink of the poisoned cup, and if he survived it was clear proof that he was not guilty. But when the crime was not serious enough to warrant the death of the suspect, the poison ordeal was applied to a cock, representing the owner who was under suspicion of felony or any other charge. In a case of theft, for instance, charges would be laid by the victim against all kinds of people, with whom probably he had previously had some quarrel, and others would gladly furnish evidence against their foes, in order to inculpate them, and have them mulcted of their possessions. Recourse would then be had to the chief, and he would decide to which medicine man the case should be taken. It was not considered safe to go to a local man, for he would be sure to have interests on one side or the other, so a man at a distance was usually chosen, as if it were easy or even possible to outdistance bribery. On the fixed

Pagan Visitors to the Mission House, Panyam

PAUL GUNEN AND FAMILY

YAKTONG, HIGH PRIEST OF KUM, AND HIS SON,
A CHRISTIAN TEACHER

day, all the accused persons resorted to the house of the medicine man, each one armed with a healthy cock under his arm, which he devoutly hoped would be proof against all the concoctions given to it. Each man in turn made his bird to drink of the potion produced by the medicine man; and if by chance one or more cocks succumbed, or gave signs of illness, the owner was pronounced guilty of the crime in question, and there was no appeal; he had to pay whatever penalty was fixed by the chief, even to his own life-blood.

To civilized minds this procedure seems unjust, but there is no doubt that such beliefs and practices were very effective as deterrents from the commission of crime. Now the thief is not afraid to go out on the darkest night, as he no longer believes in the multitude of evil spirits which are out to molest the nocturnal wayfarer; his contact with civilization, so-called, in the mining camp, has wrought a great change in his ideas. His only fear now is the "dogari," or native policeman, but there are not many of these, and it is not impossible to evade them or even to square them, if perchance they turn up at an unfortunate moment.

The following story shows what a revolution is being wrought in the whole life of the country owing to contact with the outside world, and shows, incidentally, how Christianity is making its mark on heathen minds not prejudiced in its favour.

To the south-west of Panyam is a large expanse of marsh, suitable for growing a vegetable of the tuber species, called "millom." In this part of the country there are no cactus hedges to protect the crops, but each farmer bounds his patch with a deep and wide ditch, which will suffice to keep out all wandering cattle, though not men. In old times it was the custom to erect at each end of the patch a small fetish consisting of a stick with a few leaves tied on, the whole being embellished with red clay. This was universally regarded as the guardian angel of the patch, and woe betide any one who dared pass it with evil intent! To-day, however, these small fetishes are powerless to restrain the marauder in search of food or money.

One morning, not long ago, a certain farmer went out

to see his millom beds, and found to his consternation that nocturnal visitors had cleared the whole crop. He repaired at once to the minor chief responsible for that part of the country, and told him that he must discover the thieves, and make them pay. In olden times, resort would have been had to the water-drinking, but this is not allowed any longer, so only direct evidence could bring the thieves to book. It is not easy to procure direct evidence, unless some foe is ready to avail himself of the opportunity to get his own back from the offender. In this instance no evidence was forthcoming, though there was plenty of suspicion, and that with good grounds.

At last a brilliant idea came into the heads of some heathen who were possibly concerned themselves in the theft, and wanted to shield themselves at the expense of the Christians. They went to the chief, who was decidedly anti-Christian, and suggested that as the Christians evinced no fear of walking abroad after dark, saying that their God took care of them by night as well as by day, the thieves must be of their number, for no heathen would dare to go out to a fetish-protected field by night. Therefore if the offenders did not confess, it would be best to fine the whole body of Christians for the amount claimed by the farmer. It was a specious idea, and crafty, and the hearers thought well of it, being jealous of the Christians; but for once the chief had the courage of his convictions, and he downed their proposal. "Not a bit of it," he said; "you know that the Christians' God has given them a command which they hear in their church every Sunday, 'Thou shalt not steal,' and what is more, the Christians obey that command, and do not steal. Would that more of you were like them in that respect; then I should not have these cases brought to me to settle." They retired abashed, and the white mallam, when he heard of it, thanked God for this unsought testimony to the influence of the Gospel.

Chapter VI

New Lamps for Old

THE remaining portion of this book will be devoted to introducing a few actual characters from life, to show what has been done, and is being done to-day, through the instrumentality of missionary work. Since the year 1907 a mission has been carried on among the Sura-Maghavul, and there has been a gradual transformation in progress. The mission station was built at Panyam, the chief town of the tribe. There is a local saying that what Panyam does to-day, all Maghavul will do to-morrow, so the choice of Panyam as the site of a Christian mission was evidently of God, for a more strategic position could not have been found.

I

One of the first friends of the missionary was a middle-aged man named Dakwa. He was not a big man physically, in fact he looked quite small in comparison with many of the big, fine men in whom the tribe abounds; but what he lacked in physique he made up in character, for he was always an outstanding man in the town and neighbourhood, born to be a leader. He was brought up as a heathen with the rest of his brothers and sisters, but it is evident that he was never satisfied with the crude religion of his fellow-townsmen, and when the white man arrived to teach a better way, he was at once ready to give him a hearing. In doing this, he incurred the wrath of the elders, who foretold all kinds of woe which he would bring on the family by thus befriending the foreigner. Eventually they made things so hot for him that he decided to pack up and go elsewhere to live. So, to the amazement of all, he founded a new compound for himself and three men who were bold enough to go with him on the other side of the stream to the rest of the town. Up to that time the only people who had dared to live on the western bank were the white missionaries, and it was

a very bold thing to build anywhere near these untried strangers.

Henceforth Dakwa was the faithful friend of the missionaries and championed their cause against the whole of the rest of the town. When they explained the meaning of Sunday, and asked the people not to work on their farms that day, he was the first to comply with the suggestion, and the three men who shared his home had to follow suit, not that they were at all convinced of the value or the wisdom of doing so. He rendered all the help possible in the provision of materials for the building of the mission station, but there were many things which he could not understand about the white men and their ways, and took on trust for the time being.

In those days there was no money currency in the country, and everybody who wanted to buy arranged an exchange in kind. Thus it was not an easy matter for the missionaries to pay the natives at first, and they had to resort to salt, cloth, and brass rods; however, an effort was being made to popularize the use of silver and nickel coins, and before long a supply of these reached Panyam. One day Dakwa was given a threepenny piece, but did not know what to do with it; having received it from one of the white men, out of respect to the donor he did not like to refuse it openly, but on his homeward way he showed it to his friends, and they discussed its uselessness. It was not big enough, they agreed, to melt down for a knife, or bangle, or even a ring, so when they arrived at a convenient pool out of sight of the white man's house, he threw it into the water, and there it rests to this day. But the time soon came when he learned to appreciate coins of far less facial value than a threepenny bit; the smallest coin in the currency of Nigeria is a tenth of a penny, a small nickel coin, about the size of a farthing, with a hole through the centre. This hole is also found in the other two nickel coins, the halfpenny and the penny; and is used to thread the coins on to the string which forms an essential part of the one small garment worn by the natives of those parts.

By degrees Dakwa came to occupy a prominent position in the town, and when the chief was deposed by the local

representative of the British Government on account of his ineptitude and general inefficiency, the town chose Dakwa as the best and strongest character to be the successor. His high position did not spoil him in the least; he used his power for the betterment of his people in every possible way, and administered justice as it had never been known before. He was as regular as before in his attendance at the Sunday services, and urged, though he did not compel, his people to follow suit. His name spread far and wide as a model ruler, and outlying towns sent in deputations to him for his decision in important cases. But there were not lacking those who hated and opposed him because of his outstanding nobility of character; and these took every possible opportunity to thwart and oppose him. Some of them had the support of certain native officials at the nearest government station, and they did their worst to poison the mind of the resident British official against him. In this they succeeded, for it was not long before the latter visited Panyam, and deposed Dakwa on a supposed charge of insubordination. In vain he asked to be allowed to defend himself, and to be told wherein he had offended; he was sent to his house in disgrace, and the elders were told to elect some one else in his place. As they did not know why Dakwa had been deposed, they not unnaturally came to the conclusion, failing any other reason, that it must be because of his partiality for Christianity; so they speedily chose an old man who was the greatest possible contrast to Dakwa, in every way, one who could be relied upon to oppose Christianity in his country to the last ditch. To this day he reigns in Panyam, but he is so inefficient and weak that he is not respected by any one.

But to return to Dakwa. He retired into private life, not at all sorry for many reasons to lay down the burden of office, for he had worked very strenuously, and his health was not bearing the strain at all well; but the manner of his deposition was a constant source of grief to him. "If I had done something bad," he said to the missionaries, "and they deposed me for that, then I would have thanked them, for they would have been doing the right thing; but I do not know what I have done, and they

will not tell me anything, so I must continue to sorrow because I do not know." It was not possible for the missionaries to interfere, for if they had taken any steps to help Dakwa, they would have been accused of invoking government aid for their own cause, as he was their protagonist in the country. So they could only sympathize with him, and comfort him with thoughts of another Who suffered unjustly, but through Whose suffering great good came to others. The reason for this hasty deposition was never made known; the official concerned was moved to another sphere, and his successor affected complete ignorance of the matter. Meanwhile the tradition lives on, and cannot be denied, that if a chief embraces Christianity, he will be deposed.

For Dakwa personally, the loss of the chieftainship was really a gain, as he was now able to give more time to the affairs of his own house and family. He had four wives, and these were the first women of the tribe to come to the mission for the Sunday services. He did not see his way to putting any of them away, and having married them before he had adopted Christianity, he could not be condemned for polygamy; but on this account he was never baptized, and never passed beyond the status of a recognized inquirer. He confessed to the missionary that he would gladly have lived with only one wife, as the quartette were continually bickering among themselves, and jealousy was constant. On one occasion things came to such a head that even his supply of language proved insufficient for the occasion, and he turned up one evening at the door of the missionary's house, his four wives meekly following. He told the surprised Europeans that the four had proved too much for him, and so he had brought them up for his friend the *mallam* (teacher) to tackle, and to see what his tongue could do. Fortunately the mallam's wife was there, and was speedily commissioned to take things in hand; and Dakwa was very grateful for the result.

Dakwa's suffering for his faith did not end with his deposition. The heathen party were not slow to take advantage of the great victory which they had gained, and he was not allowed to forget it. He was pre-eminently

the head man of the part of the town in which he resided, and as such entitled to a seat on the council of the old men ; but when he attempted to attend, he was told he was not wanted, and sent home. Ever afterwards, when he said or did anything for the benefit of the community, he was said to be aiming at his own restoration to the chieftainship, and so his efforts and advice were valueless. But he never went back on his profession of Christianity, and as a man he was universally respected even by his foes, and also by the Moslems who had built a small market near his house.

In 1918 the epidemic which was called " influenza " ravaged Africa as well as other countries. Pagans who had gone to work on the mines brought it back with them to their homes, and hundreds died. Dakwa, who was never very strong, caught it, and pleurisy supervened, speedily proving fatal. He was buried in the Christian fashion, close to the church which he had so loved to help in building, and to worship in when completed. But his memory lives on, and will ever inspire those who had the privilege to know and love him.

" Where has he gone ? " asked the missionary of the old high priest of the pagan religion, who had come to salute him on this mournful occasion. " Who knows ? " was the reply : " Whether he has gone to Cibelang (the good place), or whether he has fallen into Wongohor (the bad place) on the way, we do not know." But the missionary knew, and lost no time in telling the old man ; for he remembered many a happy talk with Dakwa in times gone by, and one occasion in particular lives in his memory. They had been discussing the possibilities of the future, and the nearness of the Lord's return. At the close the missionary asked : " Well, how do you feel about it, Dakwa ? " and he will not easily forget the glad response : " When He comes, I shall be very happy to see Him."

II

Simiyon Mukiyahas (Moo-kee-yah-gas) was the exact opposite of Dakwa in most things, but resembled him in that he was friendly to the missionaries from the first. He was one of the old men of the town, and head of a large

house. He was not distinguished for any special ability, being looked upon as somewhat of an old fool, rapidly approaching his dotage. He was very partial to the native beer; weak though it is, it did not take a great deal of it to reduce him to the foolish state, and when in this condition, he used to say and do much that rendered him ridiculous in the eyes of others. As a result, he was mockingly called Madaiki, really the title of the second chief of the town, and by this he was generally known, though his proper name was Mukiyahas. He had lived formerly on the top of some rocks about two miles out of the town, but his parents moved into Panyam when he was quite young, and his house was quite near to the mission. As became an old man, he was a leader of the Kum practices, and especially gained fame as an augurer, being an adept at getting messages from the little heaps of pebbles which are used for this purpose.

The remarkable thing about him was his friendship for the mission and all connected with it. There was one other from his house, a boy named Bishtu, who paid continual visits to the white men but, with a boy's curiosity and love of something new, this was not to be wondered at. This boy was one of the first to join the school which was started, and he soon learned to read, eventually being baptized with the name of Peter, and later on becoming an evangelist to his own people. He possessed from the first a beautiful character, absolutely unlike that commonly found amidst the untamed paganism in which he was brought up, and from such an one the message of Christianity met with a ready acceptance. Mukiyahas knew all about this boy, and the time that he spent in the missionaries' compound, and when the rest of the menfolk complained about it, he was always ready to make excuses for the lad, because of the secret sympathy which he felt for him in the depths of his own heart. For himself he dared not confess the new doctrine to be the truth, so he continued to spend a great deal of his time over his auguries, contenting himself with occasional visits to his white neighbours.

Soon after their arrival at Panyam, the missionaries began holding Sunday services, and the old man had the

audacity to go to them, and even became a regular attendant. When asked by other old men what he meant by it, he was ready to assure them that he had no intention of changing his faith, though in the depths of his heart he felt that this was not the truth. He always listened well, and when he agreed with what he heard, used to nod his head violently to signify his assent. But he invariably returned to his house to perform heathen rites at the request of all and sundry who came to him.

In those days the missionaries looked upon him as a harmless old fool. They so often saw him under the influence of beer, or making a fool of himself to amuse others, that they never took him very seriously. However, he had a champion in the person of one of the native agents who had come up country with the missionaries; this man would hear no evil about Mukiyahas, and stood up for him through thick and thin, maintaining that he was one of the most hopeful of the few adherents of those days. One day the old man turned up in the school, and seated himself in the alphabet class. There is no age limit for scholars in Nigeria, though at his age and in his condition there did not seem much likelihood of his ever learning anything. But here again the unexpected happened; the old man came not merely once or twice, but regularly, and seemed to be putting his whole might into the task of learning his letters. Not that he made much progress, for what he acquired one week, he forgot the next, and it must have been most discouraging to see his former class-partners mounting steadily from class to class, while he still sat facing the alphabet. Then suddenly his eyesight failed, and being unable to distinguish the letters, he disappeared entirely from school, and came to the mallam in the depths of despondency to ask if he would be shut out from heaven because he could not read his gospels. The answer given was reassuring, but he was warned once again of the meaning of true repentance, namely, a confessing and a forsaking of all known sin.

Mukiyahas was still unfailingly regular at Sunday services, and equally regular in his augury-craft, but the Spirit of God was working, though the onlookers saw but little. After an interval of more than a year his eyesight

was suddenly restored, and with great rejoicing he again took his place in school, and started afresh on the alphabet. This marked a new era in his life, for he decided to throw up heathenism altogether, and enter the inquirers' class. Such a step must have cost him something, for it meant breaking with all his old friends and companions ; it meant trouble at home too, for his three aged wives were very partial to Kum, and were not prepared to run all the risks involved by its abandonment without decided protest. So altogether it was a very strong opposition which the old man had to face, and there were several occasions when he gave way, and denied his faith, and even reverted to his former ways.

But in the end grace triumphed, and by dint of steady persevering work, the old madaiki learned to read, and became the proud possessor of a copy of the first gospel published in his native tongue, the Gospel according to St. Mark. He was also a reformed character as regards the drink, and the augury, etc., were entirely given up. There seemed to be every possibility of his being baptized in the near future, for two of his wives had died, and the one who remained was not as hostile as the other two had been. But, alas, one evening he turned up at the mission in a maudlin condition, and had to be sent back to his house in disgrace ; next day he learned to his bitter sorrow that his name had been removed from the list of those who were about to be examined with a view to baptism.

About this time he decided to make a clean cut from the old heathen relatives and friends who lived with him. Taking with him his wife, his only son, and three young men, to whom he acted *in loco parentis*, and who used to accompany him to church, he crossed the river, as Dakwa had done previously, and founded a new home. This involved a great deal of labour, clearing the site, which was strewn with volcanic boulders, and hedging in a new garden with cactus. But it was all accomplished eventually, and the new compound was dedicated by a little service, followed by a feast for the Christians. Needless to say, no hut was built there for Kum, nor were any sticks set up to denote the place where food was to be placed for the spirits.

Mukiyahas was greatly encouraged by the support given him by his only surviving son, a young man of about 25 years. When his father first entered the inquirers' class, the son would have none of it. He was not averse to attending the Sunday services occasionally, but he wanted to be a big man in the town ; he was already possessed of two wives, and was about to take a third ; in fact he did not see any good in Christianity, because he was not willing to count the cost. The missionary used to have long talks with him, but he was obdurate ; he wanted to be rich according to the native standard, and if he became a Christian, he could never attain to the wealth which he coveted. So he chose to remain a half-heathen for several years, but all the time he was watching his old father very closely. When the latter gave up the drink entirely, and also showed signs of progress in his school work, the son began to wonder why he, too, should not go to school, for what his father was able to accomplish, surely he could manage. So he joined the school, and soon made his way up from the beginners' to the middle class where the gospels were the only reading book used. He also decided to apply for admission to the inquirers' class, and was duly accepted. This was too much for two of his wives, who promptly left him of their own accord, and he was so glad to be rid of them that he did not claim repayment of the dowry from their new husbands. The third and latest wife came from a home which was very friendly to the missionaries, and from the first she accompanied her husband to the services.

Meanwhile, old Mukiyahas had finished his extended period of probation without another lapse. He had passed the reading test satisfactorily (no one may be baptized who cannot read for himself), and also the examination by the superintendent of the district. It was a great day when he was baptized and took the name of Simiyon ; a few weeks later his son also was baptized, and henceforth bore the name of Toma. Father and son were confirmed side by side by Bishop Oluwole in 1919, and six months later Toma was chosen as a recruit for the band of native evangelists who are carrying the Gospel to the outlying towns of the tribe. His wife, too, has been baptized,

and the pair of them are now in charge of an out-station in a town four miles from Panyam.

To-day Simiyon Mukiyahas is the respected leader of the Christian party in the town, and one whose counsel is sought by those who differ strongly from him in matters of religion. They used to laugh at him for his folly, but now they realize that he is a new man. In church he occupies a foremost place, and if he does make rather a show of the fact that he is able to read his gospels for himself, which the other old men around him are totally unable to do (when others are sitting down during the reading of the lesson, Simiyon stands by the nearest window or if he sits, holds the book above his head, ostensibly to get the light on the page!), who will refuse to allow him this justifiable pride?

God *is* the God of the impossible.

III

About forty years ago, when the Sura-Maghavul were revelling in their golden age of war and bloodshed, a boy was born in a town named Kerang, about six miles to the north of Panyam. Whether the crops failed through lack of rain soon after his birth, or whether he was possessed of a voracious appetite, is not known, but the name chosen for him, due doubtless to some outstanding event or characteristic, was Gu-nen, the man of hunger. While he was still a boy, a terrible outbreak of smallpox took place, and swept the country; Gunen caught it, but survived, though the marks are apparent on his face to this day. His father also survived, but several members of the household died.

As a boy, he was noted throughout the town and neighbourhood for the violence of his temper, and woe betide the one with whom he quarrelled, unless, like Gunen, he happened to be possessed of a knife or some other weapon with which to defend himself. As Gunen grew up, this characteristic became worse, and more than once he committed murder in the violence of his temper. Finally things came to such a pitch that his own people felt that

they could brook his presence no longer, and one day he found himself cast out and told never to appear again in the place.

He went down the hills to Panyam, and there was taken in by an old man who had no one to work for him, and was glad of help on his farm. The host was also a medicine man in the tribe, and lost no time in teaching his craft to the new-comer, in whom he saw a valuable accomplice. Gunen now became a medicine man, and was a great adept at the art of augury, being consulted by people from far and near. As may be imagined, he did not do this without first extracting a substantial fee from his clients, which was usually paid in corn or some other comestible, such as meat ; all this rendered him a very popular person in his compound, for all the people living there shared in the profits.

One day Gunen heard that the white men had come to settle in the country, but at first he attached little importance to them, thinking that they were only there to collect tax, which did not trouble him at all, as he could easily raise anything needed from his clients. But later on he heard that they were not of the tax-gathering order, but were missionaries, who had come to teach the people of the land the religion of the white man. This was an encroachment on his preserves, and he treated it as such. He lost no time in collecting the men of his house, and warning them against the crime of meddling in such matters. He propounded some wonderful stories of the cunning of the white men, and also foretold dire calamities which would overtake any one who dared to befriend these new teachers.

They all listened in silence, and were duly impressed by his prophecies and threats, with one exception. The more he cursed and maligned the white men, the more he stirred up the curiosity of a certain small boy, who happened to be of a very inquiring, and also independent turn of mind. At last, after listening to several long diatribes against this unwanted foreigner, the boy decided to hear the other side, and so made his way one day to the site of the white man's abode. There he mixed with the few natives who were engaged in building operations, and from

a safe distance watched every movement of the dread strangers. He did not go very near them, it is true, but as far as he could see, they did not do the outrageous things reputed of them. He repeated his visit, not merely once or twice, and each time left him more favourably impressed with the white man and his ways.

The boy's name was Jato, which may well be translated "the Nipper," and certainly he played the part suggested by that name. He had the courage of his convictions, and lost no time in acquainting Gunen with the result of his excursions to the foreigner's camp, and saying how false he had found his impressions of the white men to be. Gunen was furious, and did his very best to thrash these ideas out of Jato's mind, but he only succeeded in thrashing them in. Jato was not to be dissuaded by force or any other means, and he survived many savage attacks, though it was a wonder that Gunen did not succeed in murdering him. Finally Gunen gave up the case as hopeless, and comforted himself with the assurance that Jato was only a boy, and as such did not possess any influence in the house; he knew that his own power was sufficient to deter any of the grown-up men from attempting to follow the lad.

In course of time Jato joined the day school which was started by the missionaries, and soon learned to read. Then he attended the Sunday services, and even remained away from his farm work on Sundays during the rainy season, because he wanted to follow the God of the white men. This caused fresh trouble at home, but having gone so far, and endured so much already, he was prepared to suffer even further for his faith, and he held firm. He acted on the established principle that a strong counter-attack is the best means of defence, and he took every opportunity of telling his arch-opponent and persecutor, Gunen, all that he heard about God during his visits to the mission station. It mattered little that the latter was totally deaf in one ear, and partially in the other; he was made to listen and to hear, though he did not believe one atom of what he heard. But gradually his curiosity was aroused, though he did not admit it for some time.

Then after many months of persevering effort on Jato's

part, Gunen suggested that he should accompany the boy to the abode of the strange white men to sell some firewood, for he happened to be in need of money. Jato readily acquiesced, and the missionaries caught their first glimpse of a fierce-looking pagan, with a haunted look about his deeply-sunk eyes, and a face deeply pitted with the ravages of smallpox. They knew nothing about him, and merely thought he was an ordinary visitor, impelled by curiosity to come and have a look round. But by degrees he came to be a constant visitor to the compound, and always brought firewood, under Jato's escort. He never spoke a word, and when saluted by the missionaries, did not vouchsafe any reply; this seemed strange to them, but they imagined that, like many others, he did not understand their efforts at his own language, and supposed them to be talking English; however, the real reason was discovered later, namely, his deafness.

At length it transpired who this strange-looking individual was, and efforts were made, without success, to persuade him to come to the Sunday services, but one Sunday he stole in quietly, and took a seat near the door, as if afraid to get too far inside, lest he should not be able to escape. Of course he heard nothing, but his eyes missed nothing, and when he got home, everything was explained to him by the delighted Jato. By slow degrees his fear of the white men was dispelled, and gradually he got farther up the church, and was given a seat on the front bench, where he was able to hear a little of what was said. He was amazed beyond measure; it was all so entirely different from what he had imagined, and even wanted it to be.

Things went on in this way for some considerable time, until one day a crisis was reached, and Gunen made up his mind that it was no longer possible to follow two paths. If he were to follow Christ, he must renounce heathenism once for all; or if he were still to practise as a medicine man, he must cease coming to church. There was no middle way between the two. His mind was soon made up, and that night he called together the men of his house, and told them that he was going from henceforth to be a Christian, and abandon the medicine rites entirely. They

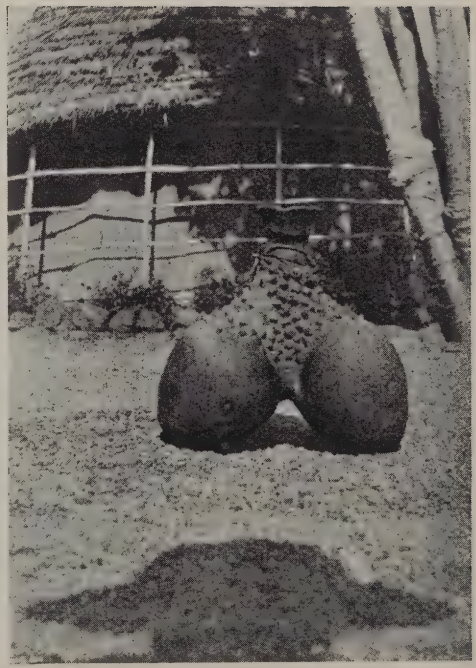
were determined to do their utmost to prevent the loss that this would mean to them, so they set to work with sticks and whips, but their efforts were unavailing. They then took Gunen to the chief in the middle of the night, and demanded his expulsion from the town. Accompanied by a few men, who dragged Gunen along with a rope round his neck, the chief took him back to the town where he had been born, and which had cast him out for his crimes years before. But long before the little procession reached that place, although it was the dead of night, word of approach had gone round, and the men of the town gathered together to resist with force, if necessary, the further progress of the little cavalcade from Panyam. They were not going to have their own former castaway forced back upon them just because Panyam had had enough of him. So they showed fight, and the Panyam people thought, in view of the fact that they were greatly outnumbered, that it would be more discreet to retire quietly home. In consequence, when the morning broke, Gunen was again in his own house, and the problem of his future was no nearer solution. The people dared not murder him, as the white man knew everything, and no other town would receive him, so he just remained where he was, and a Christian.

But although this trouble was safely weathered, further trial of his faith was before Gunen. Suddenly, within the space of a few days, his wife and both her children died. The heathen saw in this calamity the anger of the spirits at the conversion of their former agent and medicine man ; but Gunen said nothing, quietly enduring their taunts, and invitations to recant. He remained in his house, preparing his own food, and working as usual, and maintaining unfailing regularity at all the Christian services and classes. Then the unexpected happened. There appeared one morning at the entrance to the compound where he lived a strange woman, not known to anybody in Panyam. When asked who she was, she said that she came from a town about eight miles away, up in the hills. Many years ago she had been married to Gunen when he lived at Kerang, but she was so terrified of him that she had run away, and had gone to another man in this other

A Missionary buying Milk at the Mission House
He pays the woman with salt, which is much prized.

Paul Gunen (first from the right), with some of his Friends and Neighbours

A Christian Woman Winnowing Grain
Her baby is carried on her back.



Discarded Kum-Pots, Panyam

town. Now she had heard that he was no longer the old Gunen that she had known ; that he no longer sought to kill men, or indulged in those violent passions which she had so often witnessed ; but that, on the contrary, he was a changed man, and so she had come to rejoin him as his wife.

People advised her to go home before she even saw him ; for they assured her that now that he had left off practising his medicine craft, the curse of the spirits rested upon him, and his children as well as his wives were doomed to death. They impressed upon her the meaning of the fate which had overtaken his former wife and children, and warned her to change her mind while yet there was time. But she was not to be moved ; she had heard nothing but good about Gunen since he had become Christian, and was quite willing to run all the risks involved in living with him again. So she found him out, and reconciliation followed.

Gunen was delighted to be able to score off his foes once again, and lost no time in bringing his new wife to the services and school. He had to suffer severely for his faith for a long while, but he bore it all bravely, saying that he was only being repaid for the treatment which he had meted out to Jato in former years. The latter was his great ally and friend, and together they faced the unrelenting opposition of all their house-companions and relatives. Jato soon learned to read and write, and was baptized with the name of Bulus (Paul). Gunen, owing to his age, took very much longer to master the elements of education, but his tremendous perseverance and grit carried him through. The difficulty with him was how to divide his spare time between preaching to others and studying for himself ; he was so intent on telling everybody the secret of his own changed life, that very often his studies had to be carried on in the dead of night, when he could find no one awake to whom to talk.

Finally he, too, passed the examination for baptism, and chose the same name as his faithful friend, Bulus. Not long after this, he was asked to become an evangelist among the agents of the Church Missionary Society, and great was his delight at this honour. As such he received a nominal remuneration of ten shillings per month, and a

gown of office, blue for weekdays and white for Sundays; and he was expected to devote all his spare time when not farming to helping on the cause among his fellow-tribesmen. Never was there a greater enthusiast in the cause of Christ, and he has been the means under God of influencing very many. He is one of those who "cannot but speak the things which he has seen and heard." His head-knowledge is not great, for he is still waiting for training, but his heart is full to overflowing, and out of the fullness of the heart the mouth speaketh.

For three years he was at Kerang, the town from which he was expelled for his crimes many years ago. He was in sole charge of a most flourishing work there; the people built him a school, and came in large numbers to learn from him. His wife supported him well; she had learned to read, and had been baptized with the name of Mariammu (Mary), and they had three healthy children. The chief of Kerang was formerly as great an augurer as Gunen himself, and seldom had time to come out of his house to listen to the message of the Christians who visited him. But to-day he has forbidden any Kum sacrifices in his compound, the spirit hut has fallen down in ruins, and all the pots have been smashed. He assembles all his family and kindred, and goes down to the little compound which Gunen built for himself, and there they all worship God before beginning the work of the day. Many of his people are very angry that he thus favours Christianity, and are determined to give him all the trouble they can, but the old man is standing well, and cares nothing about the loss of wealth or prestige involved. As for Gunen, his very face was transfigured from the gaunt, haggard creature of a few years back; the smallpox marks were still there, but his whole expression was one of "joy unspeakable and full of glory." What hath God wrought!

POSTSCRIPT.—Since the above was written, there has ensued a sad sequel to this story. The exact truth will probably never be discovered, but let it suffice to add that another evangelist is now in charge of the work at Kerang, and Bulus Gunen has retired into private life at

Panyam. Complaints were made against him that he was interfering with the administration of the local district chief, was abusing his position as a teacher and, worse still, that his personal life was not what it should be. An inquiry was held, and this and other charges were fully investigated by the missionaries, with the result that it was thought best to remove him quietly at once. Evidently he had yielded to temptation and dishonoured the holy Name by which he was called, so that he had lost all influence with the people among whom he lived. They for their part did not wish him to return, and so he went back to his farm as a private individual. He is still a regular attendant at church and class, but, alas, he is unrepentant, and maintains his innocence, though all the missionaries who were present considered the charges proved.

Whose is the fault ? Is it right to leave a man with so scanty a knowledge of the truth in charge of a village school for more than a year without calling him in for further training ? Are we not asking for trouble when we do so ? Yet on the other hand are we not bound to make use of whatever material we have in order to satisfy the craving of these villages for the Bread of Life ? When a pagan turns to Christ as Gunen did, is he not simply invaluable as a witness to the meaning of the faith ? There were no other workers available at the time, so first of all an experienced evangelist was sent to open the work, and Gunen accompanied him. After a while circumstances compelled the removal of this senior man to another station, and Gunen remained alone with occasional visits from a missionary, when one happened to be able to go. The root of the trouble was lack of training, that in its turn was due to lack of workers, and that is due to what ?

But the work is going on. The little band of Christians in the village have sufficient insight to be able to discern between the truth of the message and the failure of the human messenger. The school is still meeting from day to day, and the gatherings on Sundays are as big as ever ; but the one who once led them is not there, and the enemy has not been slow to make capital out of his departure.

Epilogue

ENOUGH has been written to show something of the meaning of missionary effort in the little known uplands of the Northern Provinces of Nigeria. The work is going on to-day, in schools, dispensaries, and out-stations, but the vast majority of pagan tribes in the country are as yet untouched, and they are waiting for a work to be started among them similar to that now going on among the Sura-Maghavul. This is a day of unparalleled opportunity for those who believe in Christ to claim these tribes in His Name; but if the chance which now offers is not seized, it will soon become difficult, not to say impossible, to do this.

That which is worth anything must and does cost. And this is true of missionary work. It is not a luxury which a few who can afford it may indulge in at their will; it is not a fad to which a few philanthropic fanatics may devote their interest and support. It is rather a concern which affects, and affects vitally, the well-being of every single Christian, and every single Church. It *ought* to cost a great deal of prayer and thought and sacrifice. And if there be those who hang back because the cost is too great, because they are not willing for sacrifice, in order that the work may go forward, there is also this to be remembered, that the cost of delay and disobedience will be far greater than the cost of immediate obedience. It will cost much to evangelize these tribes to-day; how much more will it cost to leave them unreached and unevangelized?

Price 1/-